

Click [here](#) to download the PDF of "7 Swing Tips" just as it appeared in the pages of Golf Illustrated.

7 Swing Tips You Should Try To Get Extra Distance Fast

#1 The Perfect Setup

As you stand at the ball, so shall you reap. The quality of every golf shot you play begins at the beginning, with your address position. This is the first law of good golf.

In brief, you should stand at the ball for all standard full-swing shots so that imaginary lines running across your feet, knees, hips and shoulders are aimed to the left of your actual target. In other words, the line of your body is parallel to the target line, while your clubface when properly set is aimed directly at your target. The clubface is on the target line, while your body is left of it.

This is the well-known railroad-track alignment. The great majority of average golfers have been told this or read about it. Every professional teaches it, but somehow many golfers either forget the lesson or get into a different position without realizing it. Mostly, though, it

comes from not moving correctly into the proper address position.

Most golfers in poor alignment at address are "closed." That is, the lines connecting their feet, hips and shoulders are aimed at the target itself. It usually starts with the feet. As a result, if the clubface is squared normally, it is aimed to the right of the target. It can't be otherwise unless you shut the face down -- turn it sharply to the left. Few golfers do this because the face looks so awkward -- it looks hooked. In any case, they usually don't shut the face in this way because they don't think they have to. They think the aiming is done with their feet, hips and shoulders.

Now, if your body is closed and you make a good swing, hitting the ball solidly and squaring the clubface, the ball is going to go to the right of your actual target. When this happens, you think you pushed the shot, made a poor swing by not releasing your wrist cock in the impact zone, swung too much from inside to out or made some other mechanical miscue. You then go about trying to make swing changes.

But you should look objectively at the actual flight of the ball and not its direction. If you see that the height and trajectory are as good as they can be -- a slight draw, say, and at just the right height for the club used -- that indicates you made a good swing but were simply misaligned. You hit a perfect shot to where you were actually aiming.

#2 Forearm Rotation The Secret For Power And Control

In the golf swing, rotation has nothing to do with the turning of the body -- the shoulders, the chest or the hips. Those elements do turn in a rotating sort of way,

but that should occur in any case when making a basically sound swing. You don't want to be sliding laterally in either direction. The rotation under discussion here is with the left arm, more specifically the left forearm.

There should be absolutely no movement of the lower body in the initial stages of the backswing. Only the arms (and shoulders) move until the hands get about waist high. That initial move to start the backswing should begin with a clockwise rotation of the left forearm.

The emphasis is on the forearm because many golfers have understood the rotation to be with the left wrist and hand. However, the wrist and hand are by their nature more flexible and able to function or rotate independently of the more muscular, less flexible forearm. In fact, there is no guarantee the left forearm will rotate at all even if the wrist and hand do. In any case, if the focus is on the wrist and hand, they tend to flatten out -- the back of the left hand faces skyward. This weakens your potential to deliver maximum power and impinges on accuracy because the club is not swung on the correct plane. The plane is too flat.

By concentrating on a rotation of the left forearm, you avoid being too wristy. You also have more control over the path of the club going back and the release of the clubhead in the forward swing. It almost guarantees you will swing the club on the correct plane. That sounds like a bold statement, but it is not to say there is one plane for all golfers -- quite the contrary.

#3 Keep The Right Shoulder High For Maximum Power And Accuracy

One of the most common images we have of a

golfer at impact is the right shoulder dropping down much lower than the left shoulder. It is what oldtimers called "working under it." It is also a reminder of what used to be a "caddie swing," in which the left side bows out at impact, the club is re-routed in the backswing to move from inside to out, and the right shoulder is low and working under.

Swinging under is perceived as the way to get the ball in the air. It also is believed that it will produce a right-to-left flight -- a hook or draw. Or, more to the point, it is supposed to prevent a slice. However, a right-to-left trajectory is not guaranteed. Neither is proper ball-flight height. That's because most golfers who try to swing the club this way overdo it. They forget or don't realize that the right shoulder is already lower than the left shoulder simply because the right hand is below the left hand on the grip. Thus, by dropping the right shoulder in the downswing, they exaggerate the position and hit poor shots.

Instead, you want to keep the right shoulder at the same angle or height in relation to the left shoulder as prevailed at address. Of course, this assumes your body has not been thrust out of the proper position by pushing the right shoulder forward, purposely dropping it down or raising the right shoulder higher than the left.

These errors in address position presuppose the correct positions: Your clubface is facing down the target line with your body parallel to that line and therefore left of the target itself. Your chest is directly facing the ball, and your right shoulder is slightly lower than the left shoulder to the very degree your right hand is lower on the grip than the left. From this point,

there are two swing moves meant to retain the shoulder-height relationship set up at address. They are as much a matter of feel as they are specific mechanical movements.

First, in the backswing, feel that your shoulders are turning on the level. They are, in fact, going to be moving up and down a little. The left shoulder will drop a bit, and the right will rise a bit. On the downswing, the reverse takes place. But you must more or less suspend reality, so to speak, and feel that your shoulders are turning as if on a swivel.

Second, in the downswing, feel as if your right shoulder is staying high. You don't actually raise the shoulder. You just don't let it drop down. At first, because you have been so accustomed to the right shoulder dropping, this will give you a sense that the shoulder is being raised. In fact, it will simply stay at its original address level. These are two basic feels for keeping the right shoulder from dipping down as you swing the club to impact.

#4 Hinge & Unhinge Your Wrists

The key to effective use of the hands in the golf swing is how and when the wrists "hinge" or cock. The hands should hinge very early in the swing, and the hinging is up, not to the side. Your thumbs come toward you when the wrists hinge. The hinging forms an L-shape (with the shaft and your left arm) that is retained throughout the backswing and in the follow-through.

A good drill to demonstrate this hinging action is to take your regular grip on a club and hold it in front of you with the shaft perfectly vertical. Your wrists should be slightly hinged or cupped inward with your thumbnails facing you. Now, drop the club to the ground and address a ball

while retaining the wrist hinge just as you had it.

From here, swing the club halfway back with your left shoulder and increase the hinge slightly, bringing your thumbnails a touch more toward you. This is when the shaft and your left arm form the letter L. Maintain the hinge and letter L as you turn your shoulders completely to a full backswing. You now have blended hand action with the big muscles.

From this point, re-turn your hips and trunk and swing the club back down to the ball with the wrists hinged and the letter L maintained. You will unhinge the wrists in the impact zone, but think only of creating or recreating that L past the impact point and into the follow-through.

You actually can play your shots on the course with this routine, but you probably won't feel comfortable doing that. In any case, don't think about unhinging the wrists at impact in the downswing. That will happen. You don't have to make it happen. The only thing you should think about in the downswing is rehinging to create that letter L in the follow-through.

#5 Use Your Left Heel Like An Accelerator To Put More Power In Every Shot

The golf swing is like an automobile. The steering wheel must control the direction of the car, while the accelerator controls how fast the car moves. In the golf swing, the left hand becomes the steering wheel that controls the direction of the golf ball. The left heel is the accelerator that creates speed and power.

When setting up over the ball, your weight should be evenly distributed between the left and right. Make sure to have the weight on both the balls and heels of t he

feet. Keeping all of the weight on just the balls or the heels of the feet will cause a loss of balance on the backswing.

As you start the club back with your left hand, you will begin to feel your upper body coiling. As you reach the halfway point in your backswing, let the left heel naturally lift up 2 to 3 inches. This will automatically transfer your weight to the right side and allow the lower body to participate in this coiling action. This increase in coiling adds more potential power to the downswing. Note that as your left heel rises, your left knee should move toward your right knee. This ensures that you have transferred the weight to the right side, not just lifted your heel.

Now that the club is fully swung back, we need to unleash the power we've created. Start your downswing by placing the left heel back on the ground and shifting your weight back to your left side. Once again, make sure your knees are working toward one another. At this point in the swing, the right knee is moving toward the left. The faster you put your left heel down, the faster your weight will shift back to the left side. Increasing the speed of the weight shift makes your upper body accelerate through the ball, providing enormous power. Think of the equation as: Faster shift = faster clubhead speed = more distance.

At impact, your weight should be on your left side, and your right heel should be in the air. If your right heel is not off the ground at impact, then you're still trying to create power with your upper body. This causes you to hit the ball before your weight shift has a chance to work. Try this sequence a few times in slow motion to get the feel of it. Remember to make sure that your right heel is off the ground before

impact.

#6 Slide And Turn To Increase Clubhead Speed, Add Distance

An object moving from high to low will attain maximum speed at the bottom of the arc. The development is gradual. It builds as the object drops. Making that happen with the golf club involves a fundamental move that for some reason has been ignored by most instructors over approximately the past 20 years. It is the slide and turn of the left side to begin the downswing.

The slide and turn will eliminate the rush from the top of the backswing and will drop the clubhead into the correct position for impact -- moving down the line of flight -- and allow it to develop optimal speed in a natural, more effective way. The slide and turn is the first move in the downswing. Specifically, it is a shift of the lower body, in particular the left hip to the left -- not to the left of the target, but toward the target. Then, at impact, the left hip turns to the left or away from the target.

This turn should happen automatically -- if you are not ball conscious, if you do not think "hit" the ball, if you don't think the end of the swing is at impact.

If you eliminate the slide, you only spin -- and "spin out," as they say. No one really swings in a barrel, at least not effectively. There must be some lateral motion in the downswing. That motion should be only with the lower body, starting with the left hip.

If you only rotate your body in the downswing, you will not shift your weight sufficiently to the left, if at all. You will hit off your right foot or right side. Your right shoulder and side will move out

toward the ball rather than staying parallel to the target line. In either case, the impact is without optimal force, as the clubhead cuts across the ball. There is not enough power. The flight is also misguided.

The shift does at least three things vital to good ball striking:

1) It keeps the wrists hinged all the way to impact and produces what is commonly called the "delayed hit." This happens because the body is leading and emphasis is taken off hitting the ball with the hands.

2) The club drops vertically from the top of the backswing and thus into the right path. The vertical drop is for a split second before the club begins to move more or less horizontally, but that split second is vital. The vertical drop also helps you hold the wrist cock or angle. This, in turn, prevents you from throwing the right shoulder out toward the ball.

3) There is definitely a shift of weight to the left side. You should make a conscious effort to slide left in the downswing. But the same is not true of the turn. Everyone who plays golf has some athletic instincts. One of them is to make a turn to the left eventually and when necessary. For that reason, don't clog your mind with any more mechanical thoughts than are absolutely necessary. Think slide. The turn will happen.

#7 Widen Your Arc, Lengthen Your Swing, HIT IT A MILE!

You probably have noticed that golf ball manufacturers never tout their products as being the best for chipping. Which is to say something else you already know -- that golfers are interested mainly, if not exclusively, on hitting the ball as far as they can.

However, too many who seek that power think only a "hotter" ball will do the trick. Some golf balls will go farther than others by the nature of their construction, but in the end it is the golfer who dictates how much power he will generate. That is a swing thing.

There are a few ways to swing a golf club to produce power, but one is most important of all -- the width of your backswing arc.

Most average golfers don't maximize their personal capacity to swing the club back on the widest possible arc. Here's how:

Your goal is to extend your arms as much as possible as your shoulders rotate around your spine. At the start of the swing, swing the club straight back from the ball with your wrists unhinged and your left arm firm and straight. It's as though you were handing the clubhead to someone kneeling behind you some 6 or 7 feet. The triangle formed by your arms and shoulders at address also should be retained.

As your shoulders and torso begin to rotate, your upper left arm should remain close to your chest, and your right elbow should move away from your trunk while still pointing down. By keeping your left arm close to your body, and your right elbow down, you swing the club on the proper plane -- to the inside of the target line -- while obtaining maximum swing width and length.